

SECOND QUARTERLY REPORT

January- March 2013

Niger Development Food Aid Program “Sawki” 2012-2017



COUNTRY CONTACT	HEADQUARTERS CONTACT	PROJECT SUMMARY
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I- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mercy Corps, Africare and Helen Keller International are implementing a Development Food Aid Program (DFAP) entitled “*Sawki*” that is designed to respond to the food security needs of more than 115,000 beneficiaries in Maradi and Zinder, two of the most food insecure regions of Niger. Within these regions, *Sawki* is targeting 81 villages based on criteria of social vulnerability, economic opportunities and agro-pastoral linkages.

During the reporting period (January-March 2013), SAWKI continued administrative start up activities related to staff recruitment and logistics, carried out meetings with local authorities and partners, and made visits to the field. The program was officially launched at the national level and planning workshops were held between team members to develop the detailed implementation plan. The Sawki team participated in trainings to reinforce their capacity in monitoring and evaluation, adolescent girls’ programming, and commodities management.

Sawki staff supported ICF Macro to implement the baseline, and beneficiary selection for SO1 (pregnant and lactating women and children under 2) was completed. A community awareness-raising campaign was started in the implementation zone to introduce communities to the donor and to the strategy and objectives of the Sawki program. All agriculture and livelihoods staff in Maradi and Zinder have been hired to start the program roll out in the two communes of Droum (department of Mirriah) in Zinder and Guidan Roumdji in Maradi, for a total of 33 villages. Finally, during this quarter, Sawki oversaw the arrival and transport of 250 MT of direct distribution commodities, out of 390 MT called forward.

II. Program Overview

A staggering 60 percent of children under five in Maradi and Zinder are suffering from chronic malnutrition. This is rooted in a combination of factors, which include poverty, high population growth, limited knowledge about appropriate health and nutrition behaviors, inadequate access to health services, gender inequity, and weak agricultural and livestock systems. Consecutive droughts and other natural disasters due to climate change contribute to the problem. Even during years of normal rainfall, child under-nutrition persists, suggesting that suboptimal nutrition and health practices contribute significantly to the problem.

Mercy Corps, Helen Keller International (HKI) and Africare have joined their expertise in Niger to deliver a comprehensive package of activities, supported through partnerships with the Government of Niger (GoN), local NGOs, the National Institute of Agronomy Research (INRAN) and the private sector. *Sawki’s* overall goal is *to reduce food insecurity and malnutrition among vulnerable populations in Niger*, with a special emphasis on empowering women and adolescent girls to achieve this goal. The two strategic objectives (SO) are:

SO1: Reduce chronic malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women and children under five with an emphasis on children under two

SO2: Increase the local availability of and households’ access to nutritious food by diversifying agricultural productivity, rural households’ income and increasing resilience to shocks

III. - Program Activities

Organizational Startup Activities

1. Staffing

During this quarter the project has continued recruiting the technical staff. To date all the senior positions are filled. At the field level only 3 positions remain to be filled, 2 for M&E and 1 for nutrition. In Zinder all the staff are in place, so overall over 90% of positions are covered to date and recruitment of the remaining positions is underway.

2. Infrastructure/Equipment

The two offices and warehouses are secured and functional for both Maradi and Zinder. The offices and warehouses are fully equipped.

All the vehicles and motorbikes have purchased, and the offices have been provided with internet connection and supplemental energy source through the purchase of a generator.

3. Staff capacity building

Three major training have been organized this quarter.

✓ Girls Effect University

The Girl Effect University (funded by the Nike foundation) organized a 3 day training February 13-15, 2013 in Niamey. This was intended for Sawki partners and other key actors involved in the program implementation. In attendance were team members from Mercy Corps, HKI, and Africare, as well as GoN extension agents (health/nutrition and agriculture agents) based in the field, both from Maradi and Zinder.

The main goal of the training was to reinforce the capacity of the Sawki team in targeting adolescent girls during the implementation of program activities.

✓ Commodity management training

February 18-22, 2013, TOPs organized a commodity management training for FFP partners implementing DFAP programs. 5 Sawki staff participated in this training: the CoP, the commodities manager, one warehouse manager, one commodity tracking officer and one distribution monitor. The training gave an overview of all commodity management operations from port operations to warehouse management and food distribution to the beneficiaries.

✓ Quantitative data analysis training

TOPS organized a 6 day M&E training on quantitative data analysis using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), March 4-9th, 2013. Three full time staff Sawki staff and the M&E managers for HKI and Africare attended this training. The participants were trained on the use of SPSS and CSPRO software and the use of basic statistics for data entry and analysis.

Program Startup Activities

1. Community outreach

In March Sawki staff started a community outreach campaign, reaching to date 7 villages, or 10% of the target area, to encourage community buy-in and increase community participation and partnership. This activity is still ongoing in the remaining communities. Representatives of the commune were included in the outreach activities, with the goal of facilitating community mobilization and giving legitimacy to the team.

In each village a presentation was made during a community general assembly chaired by the head of the village with nearly every member of the community (men, women and children) in attendance. The program goals and strategies, the target group for each sector, and the donor, were presented and described. Team members made additional visits to the communities to answer questions and provide more clarification about the program.

2. Monitoring and Evaluation

✓ Baseline

The Baseline study for Sawki started in March 2013, as with other DFAP programs, conducted by ICF Macro. The survey covered 80 villages within the Sawki program area.

The support by Sawki staff to ICF Macro was to provide information on security issues, village geography, and information at the community level and when the survey team would arrive.

The ICF team noticed a significant difference between the population data provided during their household identification and the data received during the December workshop in Niamey. Notably, population sizes of some villages were sometimes double or triple that reflected by the date in December. The direct impact of this inconsistency would be on Sawki program capacity to reach all previously selected target groups in the proposal, particularly in terms of commodities distribution and services to provide to beneficiary populations.

✓ Beneficiaries Selection

To start implementing activities in the communities, the program staff conducted a beneficiaries screening during two weeks both in Maradi and Zinder. The screening consisted in identification of women and children under two who would potentially be beneficiaries of the PM2A package. The screening was done through household survey in all communities. The survey was conducted from March 21st through April 5th by 5 teams in the 33 villages that have been selected for the first year. The data entry phase is still ongoing and should be finalized by early next quarter.

One of the major findings of this survey is that initial beneficiary numbers were underestimated during the design phase. The actual numbers seem to be much higher than expected and closer to ICF Macro data. For the 33 villages of Y1 it was initially expected a number around 4,112 households, while ICF Macro reported 10,241. Sawki screening reported during the recent beneficiaries' identification 9,105 households." Mercy Corps will further analyze these findings and decide on the best approach to ensure the program can still achieve its objectives.

3. Commodity management

During this quarter Sawki received 250 MT of direct distribution commodities out of 390 MT called forward. The commodities are composed of 100 MT of lentils, 120 MT of bulgur wheat and 30 MT of vegetable oil. The remaining 140 MT is made of CSB+ to be received from FFP

pre-positioned commodities early May. This part lot represents the total to be distributed from the first call forward. An additional 340 MT have been called forward to complete this first implementation year commodities for direct distribution.

For the first 250 MT, Sawki contracted with CAT Logistics for the custom clearance and with Baltic Control Ltd for the discharge survey. The commodities were delivered through bill of landing, meaning the vessel was responsible for port clearance at the discharge point in Lomé (Togo) and also responsible for inland transportation to Sawki warehouses in Maradi and Zinder.

The Sawki commodity manager traveled to Lomé to participate in the port operations. In Togo the commodity manager held a meeting with the vessel agent, CAT Logistics and Baltic to schedule a smooth transportation and delivery to Sawki's warehouses. Total quantities loaded in trucks in Lomé are:

- 109.4TM of Bulgur
- 98,7 TM of lentils
- 1361 cartons of vegetable oil.

III- Program progress for the quarter

3.1. Strategic Objective 1: Chronic malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women & children under five is reduced

The process of identifying the beneficiaries has started and is still continuing with the data analysis and formation of the target groups such as care units, mothers care groups and identification of community promoters. The beneficiaries' identification will provide the total number of beneficiaries: number of pregnant and lactating women and children under two who will be participating in the PM2A program.

It is worth noting that only 2 communes (Guidan Roundji in Maradi and Droum in Mirriah Zinder) were screened for beneficiaries. In the approved proposal only 30 villages were to be screened the first year but Sawki chose to include all villages in selected communes. As a result 13 villages in Maradi and 20 in Zinder are have been targeted for this first of implementation. In the coming month beneficiaries screening will start for the remaining 45 villages for Y2 which will join the cohort in August 2013.

Another activity conducted this quarter was meetings with health district authorities in the two regions to determine the training needs for Integrated Management of Child Illness (IMCI) and Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) training for health staff based in the field and operating in health centers. Also this was an opportunity for the team to identify any gaps that need to be filled during field implementation.

3.1.1- Results analysis

There are no results yet to report for this strategic objective.

3.1.2- Challenges

During the community outreach that started in March, in 5 villages we found that another NGO is planning to start implementing a project similar to our program for the 3 coming years. A

decision on whether Sawki should withdraw from the three villages will be made early May after we meet with all stakeholders including GoN local authorities.

3.1.3- Next Steps

- Contextualization of outreach materials
- Identification of training needs in ENA and IMCI
- Training of trainers in ENA
- Training of field agents in ENA
- Establishment of care groups
- Lead mothers identification
- Identify adolescent girls safe spaces
- Identification of community health promoters
- Training of community health promoters in ENA
- Food distribution to selected beneficiaries

3.2. Strategic Objective 2: Local availability and households' access to nutritious food increased

The main objective of Sawki is to have an integrated program in which SO1 beneficiaries would benefit as much possible from SO2 package. The results of the PM2A beneficiaries screening will provide a basis for inclusion of these beneficiaries in SO2 agriculture and livestock activities.

In the meantime the outreach activities for household food production and farmers field demonstration have started at the community level. The team agreements with INRAN and GoN agricultural extension system that are the key actors which will provide training are underway and will be signed soon.

3.2.1- Results analysis

There are no results yet to report for this strategic objective.

3.2.2- Challenges

There are no challenges yet to report for this strategic objective.

3.2.3- Next Steps

- Assist women in identifying land in their villages that can be cultivated;
- Training on agricultural land management ;
- Identification of volunteers for women garden coordinators ;
- Training of women garden coordinators ;
- Identification of agricultural coordinators and livestock coordinators ;

- Identification of para veterinarians
- Value chain assessment

V. Cross-Cutting Activities

A scope of work for the gender analysis is being finalized for submission to FFP for review. Save the Children and Sawki plan to conduct a joint gender analysis, as an opportunity for collaboration and cross-learning, and to make the best use of program resources.

A final draft for a scope of work for the hiring of a consultant in charge of the required PERSUAP is at its final stage and the recruitment process has started.

VI. Coordination

The program held a coordination meeting in Maradi where the program management unit (PMU) is based February 27-28th, 2013. All newly hired staff were able to meet and review the detailed implementation plan. The team also discussed and adjusted monthly and quarterly plans to set realistic targets for the coming implementation quarter, and clearly defined the division of roles and responsibilities among team members. The PMU has also scheduled weekly meetings for program and operational planning.

VII. Lessons learned

Related to organizational effectiveness, the coordination meetings proved essential to defining the roles and responsibilities of team members and opportunities for cross-learning and collaboration.